

* TITLE *

Masculinity
Construction.

A Critique
And

Experiential
Perspective (20 min)

* Nov. 10 - 1997 - ODB. *

Holiday Inn - San Fernando Rm.
Monday 10th November 1997

* WORKSHOP *
Domestic Violence - A Focus on Male
Perpetrators

Management Coordinators:

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Executive Summary

(After Being Introduced . . . my comments)
A pleasant good morning ladies and gentlemen. For those of you who follow the interactive media, the radio and TV talk shows, I am known as Mr. River Estate. I will begin my presentation, titled, "Masculinity Construction - A Critique and Experiential Perspective", with an Introduction in which I will look at the guidelines laid down by the pioneers as regards male behavior. I will then examine the Caribbean Thrust and the Difference from the International Thrust, ending in aspects of my first discussion at linking the Mens' Movement to Domestic Violence. I will then explain the basis for my critique of Masculinity, Power and Personality Structure, developing each area conservatively. I will conclude with a postulation on Spirituality (God) and recommend a solution.
It was an extreme pleasure preparing this presentation, I sincerely hope you enjoy it.

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INTRODUCTION

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In 1991, Mark Etkin, Canadian M.D. husband, father and co-founder of Manitoba Men's Network, in reviewing the "Men's Movement" with a sub-heading "Ending The Brutality" suggested that important work remains to be done in several areas.

- 1/ Men need to be more vocal against violence against women and children.
- 2/ Men need to realise that pornography defines and limits our sexual experience and that its aim is to control our sexuality and our pocket books.
- 3/ Men need to be more active in discussing the male experience, including the experience of being the oppressor of women.
- 4/ We need to discuss the way sexism limits us.
- 5/ We need to support other men who are trying to make positive changes in their lives.
- 6/ And we need to develop role models and definitions of masculinity that are male defined, non-sexist, compassionate, energetic, sexual and whole.

THE CARIBBEAN THRUST

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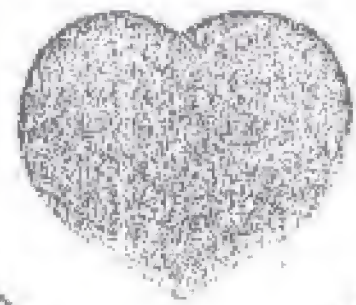
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THE CARIBBEAN THRUST

Those suggestions, activist in nature, blossomed in 1994 with an emerging Caribbean Men's Movement, in the form of MAVAW (Men Against Violence Against Women) MEN (Men's Enlightened Network) ARTOM (Association For The Reorientation And Transformation of Masculinity) and MSC (Male Support Committee) in the department of Women Affairs, all Trinidad and Tobago based.

In 1991, Fathers Incorporated was conceptualized in Jamaica. Barbados has the National Men's Fellowship Association and St. Lucia, the Mothers' and Fathers' Union. Belize in 1996 was in the process of putting together a men's group called 'The Brothers of BOWAND'. BOWAND is a Belize feminist organisation (Belize Organisation For Women and Development).

THE DIFFERENCE

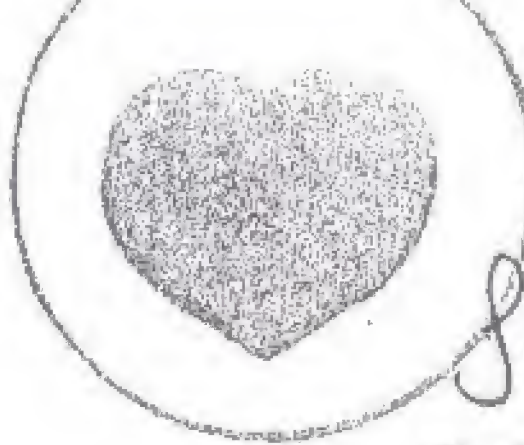
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In addition to its sociopolitical, activist, support, research agenda, the Caribbean Movement, in studying Men and Masculinity, differed from the work done between 1970 and 1990 by way of focus in two ways:-

- 1/ including the manifestations of men's anger alongside men's power and pain.
- 2/ co-operating with the feminist movement in a by-feminist methodology of joint or in common association.

As a member of MAVAW, I am now recording a measure of discomfort with the work done between 1987 and 1990 which places its emphasis on analysing different masculinities and the contradictory experiences of power.

FIRST DISCUSSION

In November of 1996, in another place, I began the analysis of the Men's Movement and its relation to Domestic Violence, highlighting the difference between the local and foreign components of the movement, noting that the future lies in our accepting Maleness as a gift and Manhood as a choice. That analysis is available from the Center for Gender and Development Studies, St. Augustine Campus.

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EXPLANATION

Let me explain the reasons for my discomfort with the academic postulations to date, on power masculinity and personality. First, let me place these three important words within the context of Masculinity Construction. Maleness is a gift of sexual difference from God. Manhood is the choice practiced using the best qualities of masculinity for the common goal of survival of the human species. The praxis of masculinity is intricately linked to personality development and the element of power. Maleness is a whole concept as is Femaleness. Masculinity is the distinguishing qualities of the male sex. Since we have one male sex, we have one masculinity. The discourse on a human being, who is in between male and female is appropriately carried on in the relevant scientific community. We await their description of such a praxis.

MASCULINITIES

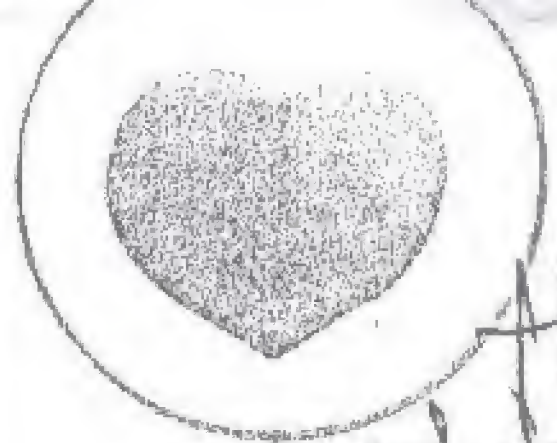
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MASCULINITIES

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Harry Brod, the most voiceferous proponent of the concept of different masculinities argues that if "gender" is not natural difference, but constructed power [and thus] a "relational concept" then the studies of different masculinities is critical for the understanding of a male-dominated society. His contemporary, Dierdre English has put it more bluntly, quote "whether we love men or hate them, we as feminists have no task more necessary than understanding them," unquote. I argue that gender is "natural difference" and is therefore a "relationship concept". I further state that since men and women are essential for the continuation of the human race, we are equal. However we must introduce the concept and practice of "Equity" in our research, teaching and solutions, to provide for the necessary differences in the whole process of socialization and reproduction. It would follow naturally then, that we study man as a constructed masculinity and woman as a constructed femininity. The variety of relationships in society, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, do not indicate —/7

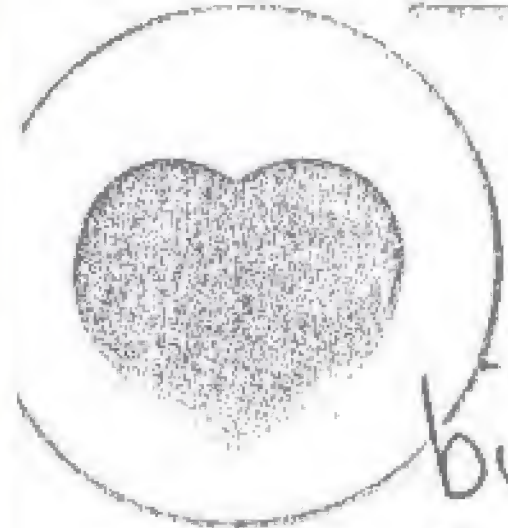
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do not indicate fundamental differences but consequential ones, originating from genetic composition in some instances and/or environmental socialization. (fracturing if you may)

POWER

To further cloud the issue of a singular masculinity vs. different masculinities, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in their 1987 text "Democracy and Capitalism" postulate, and they have academic support, quote, "power is heterogeneous obeying no simple logic. Distinct structures of power are not merely juxtaposed, they are bound together in a common process of social reproduction. Because people's lives are generally governed by more than one distinct power structure, for example, one may be a worker, a wife and a citizen, we experience power as heterogeneous," unquote. Power defined, is seen in a relationship context as our capacity to dominate and control humans or the world around us. What the academics have left out in their definition is the aspect of control over self, therefore not being able to realise the simple logic in power.

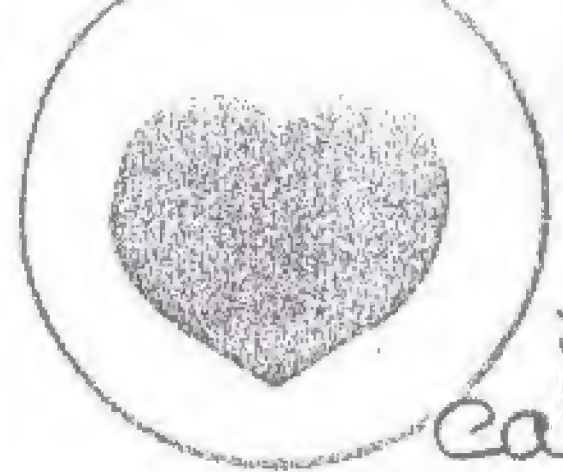
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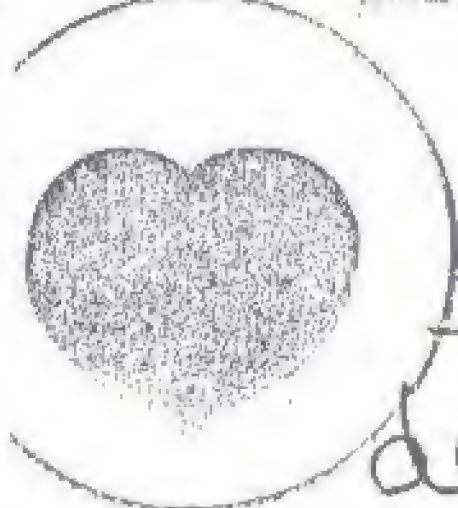
..... logic in power.

In my view, power is homogeneous as a capacity to control and dominate. Power however, exist in two distinct dimensions, an External one and an Internal one. Further, power acts on the three conscious states of a human being ie the physical, the emotional and the spiritual.

Internally and in singular mode a person can develop high degrees of control and dominate the consciousness of their personal physical, emotional and spiritual being, which when at equilibrium radiates peace and is extremely immune from external power, without seeking to exercise external power.

Externally and in plural mode a person or persons can develop similar high degrees of control and dominate the consciousness of other human beings, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Both of these power dimensions are homogeneous and the success within each depends on the corresponding failure of the other. When power reaches equilibrium in the two ~~external~~ dimensions we as the human race would have achieved world peace.

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..... world peace.

this postulation on Power, which will be developed and published at a later date, removes the use of its heterogeneity in, furthering the concept and study of different masculinities; incidentally a line of thought only developed in "men's studies". To date, I have not heard or read our women feminists or otherwise, discussing different femininities and the heterogeneity and contradictions of power in female relationships.

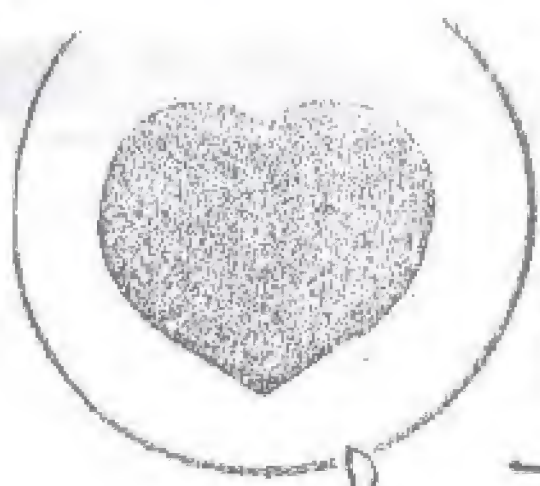
The words of Michael Kaufman Ph.D, in an article in the Men's Studies Review on "A Framework for Research on Men and Masculinity" is applicable here, quote, "For men's studies this means establishing a relationship between intellectual practice, political organizing and personal change. Building links to ongoing attempts to organize and politicize men and women along anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal lines is key. It allows us to maintain political balance, to appreciate the sensitivities of intervening as men against sexism, to respond to the concerns of men and women from different walks of life engaged in a variety of political and cultural practices, to avoid isolation within a middle class academic community and to help ensure that what we do will make a real contribution to the process of social change". unquote

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...social change." unquote

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PERSONALITY STRUCTURE

I will conclude my presentation with a brief look at personality development and Masculinity Construction. The concept of personality structure now generally followed is that proposed by Sigmund Freud, who postulated three psychic segments in the structure of the personality. While these structural divisions are hypothetical, they offer a useful classification of the system of human drives. They are, the ID, the Ego and the Superego.

The ID is a collective name for the primitive biological impulses. It represents the innate portion of the personality. The physiologically determined drives for air, food, water and other nutrient substances, maintenance of bodily temperature and physical integrity and procreation are thought of as ID functions. Associated with these primitive drives are the protective aversive states of pain, distress, and rage and the cravings to satisfy hunger, thirst and avoid suffocation.

The Ego, or reality-testing self, is that part or function of the personality that establishes a relationship with the world in which we live. The Ego deals with the environment through conscious perception, thought, feeling and action.

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.... feeling and action.

It contains the evaluating, judging, compromising, solution-forming and defense-creating aspects of the personality. Its functions are to deal rationally with the requirements of reality, to adopt behavior to the environment and to maintain harmony between the urges of the ID and the demands and aspirations of the superego.

The Superego is the observer and evaluator of ego functioning, comparing it with an ideal standard - an ideal derived from standards of behavior perceived over time, in parents, teachers and others significant. It provides the aspirational direction and demand for achievement within each personality.

In the well adjusted person, behavior simultaneously and successfully meets the demands of the ID, the Ego and the Superego. On the other hand, the behavior of the neurotic, the psychotic and the pathological personality with serious and repetitive social maladjustment may be considered to result from a balance of these segments of the personality.

SPIRITUALITY (GOD)

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SPIRITUALITY (GOD)

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What the theorists have eliminated or neglected to include for understanding personality structure is a spiritual component. We all know how difficult relationships become because of strong religious beliefs. As a matter of fact, at a recent Fullbright conference, Ex. Bishop Elive Abdulah stated that religion is the biggest contributor to conflict in the world today. Therefore, neglecting this factor in personality development theory, leaves out a most important consideration for understanding masculinity construction. This consideration is the superiority complex that men develop consciously or unconsciously by having the Ego and the Superego relate to a God in the male image. All the research points to a direct relation between Male God Imaging and power play in relationships that result in violent behaviour, and abuse. My simple recommendation therefore, is that we lobby for a universal understanding and appreciation of the fact that God lives in all life and has no gender/sex. In man God has a masculine face. In woman God has a feminine face. Consequently, since it is the same God, we must fully accept the equality of the sexes, emphasizing that the principles of equity be applied providing for the differences in the sexes.

I Thank You In Nations Building

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20 minutes